

PLC

Professional
Learning
Communities

Research

- In 1989, Susan Rosenholtz's study of 78 schools found that "learning-enriched schools" were characterized by "collective commitments to student learning in collaborative settings."
- In 1995 - Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage researched 1,200 schools and found that, "the most successful schools were those that used restructuring tools to help them function as professional learning communities."

The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community. The path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities.

- Milbrey McLaughlin

Professor of Education - Stanford University

PLC - Defined

Educators committed to working together collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLC's operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.

- DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, 2006

History

- 1960's - Research - Alternative to teaching in isolation
- 1983 - 2002 - Richard Dufour was Principal and Superintendent of Adlai Stevenson High School
- He developed the structure to ensure success for all students through a PLC focus.
- During his tenure the school was described as "the most recognized and celebrated school in America"

Characteristics of a Learning Community

- Shared mission, vision, values, goals
- Collaborative teams FOCUSED ON LEARNING
- Collective inquiry into “best practice” and “current reality”
- Action orientation / experimentation
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Results orientation

The Big Ideas of PLCs: Focus on Learning

- We ensure that all students learn at high levels.
- We achieve it through a collaborative culture.
- We focus on results, not intentions.

If the purpose of school is truly to ensure high levels of learning for all students, schools will:

- Clarify what each student is expected to learn.
- Monitor each student's learning on a timely basis.
- Create systems to ensure students receive additional time and support if they are not learning.

Team Learning Process

- Clarify 8-10 Essential Common Outcomes per semester by Course / Content Area
- Develop at least 4 Common Assessments per year
- Establish Specific Measurable Standards or Proficiency Targets - SMART Goals
- Analyze Results
- Identify and Implement Improvement Strategies for instruction

Assessing Your School's Current Reality

- Clarity on What Students Must Know and Be Able to Do
- Assessing Student Learning on the Essential Curriculum

Assess Your School's Response When Kids Don't Learn

- Are our students assured EXTRA TIME AND SUPPORT for learning
- Is our response TIMELY? How quickly are we able to identify the kids who need extra time and support? Is our focus prompt intervention rather than sluggish remediation?
- Is our response DIRECTIVE rather than invitational? Are kids invited to put in extra time or does our system ensure they put in extra time?
- Is our response SYSTEMATIC? Do kids receive this intervention according to a school-wide plan rather than at the discretion of individual teachers?

Our Successes

- Some common assessments were developed.
- Teachers crossed boundaries by working with new people.
- At times we were able to give students more time to learn a concept during the regular school day.
- At the K-2 level, volunteers were utilized effectively.

Our Problems in Implementation

- There were not enough classes at the same grade level.
- No clear idea of intent
- Started in the middle of the school year.
- Current reality piece missing
- Tutorial Nightmare

Ethical Implications

- Time spent planning tutorials / enrichment is taken away from the intent of the PLCs or from individual planning time.
- Is 30 min. of time taken out of the regular school day for remediation / enrichment the best use of student and teacher time?
- What about those teachers who will not contribute or who do the bare minimum?
- The benefit is to a small segment of the school populations.

References

Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R. & Karkanek, G. (2004). *Whatever it takes: How professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn*.
Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Barth, R., Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., Eason-Watkins, B. (2005). *On Common Ground*.
(Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., Ed.). Bloomington, IN: copyright Solution Tree.

Dufour, R. & Dufour, R. (2006). *Assessing and Advancing Our Progress on the PLC Journey*, copyright Solution Tree.

Research, education tools and blog for building a professional learning community,
Retrieved on July, 17, 2009 from <http://www.allthingsplc.info>

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and